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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00 HA-05 MCT-01 /096 W
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R 300745Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7904
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L JOHANNESBURG 1636

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: SOWETO POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN PERIOD OF RECESSION

REF: (A) JOHANNESBURG 052, (B) JOHANNESBURG 1558, (C) JOHANNESBURG 1004

1. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL MOMENTUM STEMMING FROM THE JUNE 1976 SOWETO RIOTS HAS LARGELY DIED AS THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN SOWETO HAS CONTINUED TO RECEDE. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IS VIRTUALLY DEFUNCT DUE TO A COLLAPSE OF LEADERSHIP AND EVEN THE COMMITTEE OF TEN IS FACED WITH SEVERE INTERNAL LEADERSHIP PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE SOWETO POLITICAL SCENE IS CALM AS THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY HAS RECEDED TO PRE-JUNE 1976 LEVELS. A SOURCE INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN BOTH STUDENT AND COMMITTEE OF TEN POLITICS SAYS THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP, ONCE THE BACKBONE OF POLITICAL PROTEST,HAS DISSOLVED (REF A) AND STUDENTS "IN THE NEAR FUTURE WILL ACT IN A SUPPORTING ROLE".

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3. KINGDOM LOLWANE, WHOSE FATHER IS DOUGLAS LOLWANE OF THE COMMITTEE OF TEN, REVEALED THE FOUR OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS RELEASED FROM DETENTION HAVE ADVISED DR. NTHATO MOTLANA THAT "THE SITUATION DEMANDS CALM" AND THAT IF HE CHOOSES TO MAKE ANY FUTURE "PROVOCATIVE" POLITICAL STATEMENTS,HE MUST DO SO ON HIS OWN FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE STILL IN DETENTION. THE COMMITTEE OF TEN HAS ALREADY LARGELY CEASED TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN A SYMBOLIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED COMMUNITY COUNCIL. TWO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, V.L. KRAAI AND ELLEN KHUZWAYO, HAVE, FOR THE MOST PART, WITHDRAWN FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITY WHILE A THIRD, LEONARD MOSALA, HAS ADOPTED A VERY LOW PROFILE. THE FOURTH, MR. LOLWANE, HAS ALSO RETREATED FROM THE PUBLIC EYE, LEAVING MOTLANA ALONE AS THE SOLE VISIBLE FIGURE OF THOSE RELEASED. IT CAN BE EXPECTED, MOREOVER, THAT MOTLANA, NOW UNDER PRESSURE FROM BOTH SIDES, WILL ADOPT A LOWER PROFILE, PARTICULARLY IN THE WAKE OF HIS BEING WARNED SUBSEQUENT TO THE JUNE 16 COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONIES (REF B).

4. A FURTHER CAUSE OF CONCERN TO THE COMMITTEE OF TEN IS THE RUMOR PICKED UP FROM SOWETO POLICE COMMANDER JAN VISSER THAT L.M. MATHABATHE, FORMER HEADMASTER OF MORRIS ISAACSON SCHOOL AND A POPULAR MEMBER OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMITTEE OF TEN, MAY BE CHARGED ALONG WITH MORRIS ISAACSON HIGH SCHOOL VICE PRINCIPAL FANYANA MAZIBUKO. IT IS KNOWN THAT POLICE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT MATHABATHE FOSTERED THE SOWETO RIOTS AS MORRISS ISAACSON WAS ONE OF THE CENTERS OF INCIPIENT REVOLT. INDEED, IT IS THE FEAR OF MANY IN THE COMMUNITY THAT FUTURE PROVOCATIONS IN THE STREETS WILL ONLY JEOPARDIZE THE PROSPECTS FOR RELEASE OF THOSE STILL IN DETENTION.

5. LOLWANE STATED THAT THE STUDENT MOVEMENT IS WITHOUT LEADERSHIP AS "THE SMART ONES" WILL NO LONGER RISK PRISON. THE REALITIES OF DETENTION OUTWEIGH ANY WISH FOR POLITICAL MARTYRDOM, ACCORDING TO LOLWANE (ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST OF THE 1976 STUDENT LEADERS WHO SERVED TIME IN DETEN-TION IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE RIOTS). LOLWANE (NOW A PROTEGE OF PERCY QOBOZA ON THE POST) SAYS POLICE HAVE ROUNDED UP VIRTUALLY ALL WHO HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH SSRC ACTIVITIES, WHILE THE REST HAVE FLED THE COUNTRY. LOLWANE SAID EVEN THOSE OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY WERE NOW LARGELY IRRELEVANT AND THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY ONE OF HIS POLITICAL CONTACTS (WHO WAS A STATE WITNESS IN PRETORIA ANC TRIAL) THAT FORMER SSRC CHAIRMAN

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TROFOMO SONO'S CAPTURE (REF C) WAS "ARRANGED" SO THAT
HE COULD COME BACK INTO THE COUNTRY AS AN INFORMER.

6. THE NEXT TWO YEARS WILL SEE RELATIVE CALM, ALTHOUGH
THERE ARE ISOLATED CELLS OF THE ANC AND PAC AT WORK.
THESE DO NOT COMMAND WIDE POPULAR SUPPORT, HOWEVER, SO
AT BEST (OR WORST), THERE MAY BE OCCASIONAL ACTS OF
SABOTAGE OR VIOLENCE BUT LITTLE SUSTAINED POLITICAL
ACTIVITY. THE COMMUNITY CONTINUES TO REJECT THE
COMMUNITY COUNCILS IN CONCEPT AND, PARTICULARLY,
DAVID THEBAHALI. NONETHELESS, POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN
THE BLACK COMMUNITY OF SOWETO IS IN A PERIOD OF RECESSION.

7. COMMENT: LOLWANE IS REGARDED AS ONE OF OUR BEST
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SOURCES AND HIS ASSESSMENT COINCIDES WITH OUR OWN.
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